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A

SERMON

Preached before the

KING,

ON

St Stephen's-day.

By *SY. PATRICK*, D.D. Chaplain in Ordinary to His MAJESTY.

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ACT. VII. 59.

And they ſtoned Stephen, calling upon God, and ſaying, Lord Jeſus receive my Spirit.

O How beautiful is a Succeſſion of Good things! (as St. *Gregory Nyſſen* cries out in a Sermon on this Feſtival.) How ſweet is it when one Pleaſure tranſmits us to another, and the end of the preſent is the beginning of a new Satisfaction! Behold here that which we all ſo much

desire; Ἑορτὴν ἐξ ἑορτῆς, Feast after Feast, and Grace upon Grace. Yesterday the Lord of all entertained us; to day we are invited by the noble Imitator of our Lord. The one feasted us by *putting on* the Man for *us*; the other by *putting off* the Man for *him*: the one by coming down into the Dungeon of this Life (as he calls it) for our sake; the other by going out of it for his. O happy life of Christians! whom their Lord would have to *rejoyce alway*; and *in every thing to give thanks*; first for him, and then for those Worthies that followed him.

For next to the most Blessed Redeemer of Mankind, the great Captain of our Salvation, those blessed Saints, who were the great Champions of his holy Truth, challenge our solemn and devout Commemoration. The Christian Religion, which comforts us with such a blessed Hope, was propagated by their means, especially by
Col. I. 24. their Sufferings; which *filled up* (as St. *Paul* speaks) *that which was behind*, or wanting, *of the afflictions of Christ in their*

their fleſh. There were no Sufferings wanting indeed to complete Chriſt's Satisfaction; but there did ſome remain to complete the Teſtimony, which he had begun to give by Blood to the Truth of God. Theſe the Apoſtles and other Great perſons filled up and finiſhed, in thoſe parts of the World where he had not himſelf in Perſon appeared. There they publiſhed the ſame Truth for which he died, and teſtified and confirmed it in the ſame manner that he had done, by laying down their Life for it: ſo that in them he ſtill lived, and preached, and wrought wonders, and was perſecuted, and deſpiſed Death, and ſubdued the Nations under his feet. *He that overcame death once for us* (ſays one of theſe Martyrs) *overcomes it always in us. In us he fights, and in us he conquers. In theſe combats which we conſtantly endure*, & coronat pariter & coronatur, *he both crowns, and is likewiſe crowned.* They are the words of S. *Cyprian.* *Epiſt. VIII.*

Now among all thoſe Triumphant

Souls, who ſo honourably witneſſed to our Saviour, the moſt Eminent was this Glorious Martyr S. *Stephen*, whoſe Memory is this day celebrated; becauſe he was the firſt who ſubſcribed the Chriſtian Doctrine, and ſealed it with his Blood; becoming thereby *Primicerius Martyrum*, (as S. *Aug.* calls him) the Chief, the Prince and Captain of the Martyrs, as Chriſt is the Prince and Captain of their and our Salvation. Before he had ſeen any mere Man leading him the way, when there were no footſteps but thoſe of our Saviours, wherein to tread; he led the way himſelf in a Bloody path, and arrived to the Honour of being the *Firſt-born* of all thoſe whoſe *Nativities*, that is, Martyrdoms, the Church commemorates with her Praiſes and Thankſgivings. And this he did in the very firſt year (as it is moſt probable) after our Lord's Aſcenſion to the Throne of his Glory; and when he had but newly received Impoſition of Hands: ὥσπερ εἰς αὐτὸ τοῦτο προκεχθείς, (as *Euſebius* ſpeaks) as if he had been Ordained only for this Miniſtry, to ſacrifice his Life for the Teſtimony of *Jeſus*. It

Lib. 11. *Hiſt. Eccleſ.* *c.* 1.

It is an eaſie thing, as S. *Gregory Nazianzen* ſpeaks, φιλοσοφῆν ἔξω κινδύνων, to be a Chriſtian when there is no danger; and when there is, all ſufferings are the eaſier, when we have many Companions, or glorious Examples to encourage us. But it is the ſingular priviledg, and peculiar glory of this Saint, that πρῶτος πρὸ χοροῦ, &c. *He was the firſt that opened the paſſage to the quire of Martyrs; the firſt that reſiſted unto blood, ſtriving againſt ſin; the firſt that was adorned (agreeable to his Name) with the crown and diadem of confeſſion.* *Greg. Nyſſ. & Euſebius.*

It is not my intention, nor will the time permit me to relate the whole ſtory of this great mans ſufferings, together with the occaſion of them; how he overpowered his Adverſaries with the Wiſdom and Spirit wherewith he proved Jeſus to be the Son of God; how he aſtoniſhed them with the Wonders and Miracles he did among the people; how he ſtopt the mouths of thoſe that diſputed with him; and how Falſe Witneſſes were thereupon ſuborned to bring in an Accuſation

ſation againſt him: but ſhall only note the Invincible Reſolution, and the Pious Patience of this Bleſſed Martyr, under all that he endured:

For they ſtoned Stephen, calling upon God, and ſaying, Lord Jeſus receive my ſpirit.

Stoning was the heavieſt Puniſhment that the Law of *Moſes* enacted againſt the moſt grievous Crimes. If a man had blaſphemed God, or made his Children paſs through the fire to *Moloch*, or committed villany with a Beaſt, or curſed his Parents (to name none of the reſt of thoſe XVIII ſorts of ſinners who were to be thus uſed), they could do no more, to ſhew their deteſtation of his wickedneſs, than to daſh him againſt the ſtones; and if that did not diſpatch him, to throw ſtones at him till he died. Now when a whole ſhowre of theſe came pouring down on this Good-mans head, when the blind Multitude ran upon him with ſuch a rage, as if he had been the vileſt

vileſt creature on Gods earth, it did not move his ſpirit in the leaſt to any unchriſtian paſſion, nor extort from him one angry, one revengeful, one unſeemly word. He only commended himſelf to God, and prayed for his Perſecutors, and expreſſed his hope in Jeſus, that when they had beaten his Soul out of his Body, he would receive it unto himſelf.

And great reaſon he had for ſuch Hope, being already advanced by the Faith of Chriſt to ſuch an Heavenly and God-like nature, as to expreſs the greateſt love to thoſe who hated him ſo bitterly; and to expoſe himſelf to the greateſt danger for the ſake of Chriſtian Piety, which he deſired by theſe means to propagate even among its moſt deadly enemies. And if we rightly conſider it, we ſhall not eaſily find any thing that ſo much declares the Greatneſs, the Excellency (and as I may call it, the Divineneſs) of any mans ſpirit, or tends ſo effectually to promote the Chriſtian Faith, as truly pious Patience under the greateſt Sufferings upon its account. Firſt,

I.

First, I say it is an argument of a great and noble Spirit; it declares more than any thing else, the force and vertue of any mans mind. As Complaints, continual Repinings, and violent Commotions, argue weakness and infirmity: so silent Meekness, chearful Submission, and quiet composed Patience when we suffer wrongfully, speak an Heart indued with strength and fortitude. The World indeed thinks those most powerful, who can do wrong and not be punished for it; they that can irresistably overpower and oppress others, have gained the Titles of Mighty, Illustrious, and Magnanimous: but in a right estimation of things, these Titles belong to such Souls as can suffer all the evil that those men do, with an humble constancy, and meek resignation of themselves to the Will of God. These are the truly Great and Unconquerable Spirits; these ought most to be admired and renowned, for they remain Victorious even over their insulting

ing Enemies: they triumph over thoſe that lead them captive: Who find a ſtop put to the courſe of their Conqueſts, when they meet with ſuch Spirits as cannot be ſubdued; nay, are in pain, and inwardly grieved, to ſee men ſuffer chearfully, more than they can lay upon them. *Jacuit inter pœnas, pœnis ſuis fortior*, &c. ſays S. *Cyprian* of *Celerinus*. "He lay tormented, ſtronger than "the torments he indured; freer in pri- "ſon than they that ſhut him in; high- "er, when flat upon the ground, than "they that trampled on him; more at li- "berty in chains, than they that bound "him; ſublimer by far when condemn- "ed, than they that ſate on the Bench "and judged him. *Epiſt. XXXIV.*

It was a ſublime Spirit indeed that poſſeſſed theſe mens Breaſts: for it raiſed them by theſe means not only above the common rank of mankind, and above all thoſe who had aſtoniſhed the World with their Greatneſs and Power; but far above thoſe gods whom the Nations wor-

ſhipped. Moſt of which had left no Records but of their Amours, their Pleaſures and Volupteous Enjoyments; and none of which had made themſelves remarkable for patient Innocence, and pious Paſſing by injuries, without any thought or deſire of revenge. This was a thing proper to the Chriſtian Hero's, as the Martyrs and Confeſſors may be juſtly called, who became hereby more than Men; and, as ſome of the Ancients ventured to ſay, more than Angels: Διὰ τῶν ἐν σώμασιν ἀγώνων, τὰς ἀσωμάτων φύσεις ὑπερβάλλοντες, by the Agonies and Conflicts they endured in their bodies, excelling thoſe Natures which have no bodies, and conſequently no ſuch pains and miſeries to contend withal, as thoſe Souls (incumbred with Fleſh) overcame. Which proclaimed ſo loudly the Power of the Ineffable Father in them (as *Juſtin* one of theſe Martyrs ſpeaks), that they won the hearts of ſober Pagans to the Service of that God, who inſpired his worſhippers with ſuch meek and humble, but reſolved and undaunted Spirits. Which is the ſecond thing:

II.

II.

That Christianity was hereby marvellously promoted, and made a great progress in the World, though this seemed to be the ready way to extinguish it. *Celsus* himself, as great an enemy as he was to Christianity, was put to his shifts, and forced to quit his former Principles, when he came to consider the sufferings of the Martyrs. Though he was an *Epicuræan* in his other Writings, as *Origen* tells us; yet when he set himself to dispute against Christian Religion, he could not but confess that it was a Generous and Worthy thing, to lay down their Lives in the Defence of it; and, that nothing was more base, than for a Man to flinch from a true Opinion for fear of danger. For he goes on to acknowledg, when he was in this good mood, "that there is in Man κρεῖττόν τι "τῆς γνώμης, something better than his ear- "thy part; which is, says he, of kin to "God. And therefore all well-bred "Souls desire to be near to their Origi- "nal, and would willingly know more

Lib. 1. contra Cels.

"of him. A worthy Confeſſion, which the power of Truth ſometimes extorts from its greateſt Enemies. And it was eminently verified in this holy Martyr, of whom we may ſpeak truly in his words, that being well bred (in the School of Chriſt) πάντη ἐφίεσαι τῦ συγγενῦς, he deſired by all means to be with his Heavenly Kindred. Which he knew would not leſſen the Family of Chriſt here on earth, but rather increaſe it, and make it more numerous. "For as skilful Wreſtlers, ſays "S. *Greg. Nyſſ.* by yielding a little, and "bowing their bodies under thoſe that "contend with them, more eaſily over-"throw them, and lay them flat on the "ground: So did this grrat *Stephen* bruiſe "the mighty Adverſary the Devil, by "falling to the earth himſelf. Then it was that the Apoſtles were driven away from *Jeruſalem*, and began to run throughout the World. This was the occaſion of the Publiſhing of the Word every where, to the ruine of the Devil's Kingdom. And beſides this, his wonderful Piety, and compaſſionate Kindneſs even

to

to his Perſecutors, we may rationally think touch'd ſome of their Hearts, and made them relent and turn to God. For at that very time when they were murdering him, he like a Spiritual Prieſt (as the fore-named Father ſpeaks) whoſe blood was ſprinkled againſt their will before God, interceded with great charity for them, *ſaying, Lord, lay not this ſin to their charge.*

When their brutiſh fury was a little over, and they reflected on what had paſſed with ſome coolneſs, they could not ſure but (ſome of them) be melted with ſuch ardent love, as well as aſtoniſhed at ſuch rare courage. For in ſucceeding times, it is certain, Chriſtian Patience had ſuch effect upon many hearts, that it gave a great ſtroke to their converſion unto Chriſt. *Juſtin*, whom I mentioned before, profeſſes, That the firſt thing that inclined him to the faith of Chriſt, was the devout conſtancy which he beheld in thoſe, who ſuffered for it. And *Tertullian* avows in his Apology to all the Pagan world,

world, that *Cicero*, *Seneca*, *Pyrrho*, *Callinicus*, with all the reſt of their great Writers, who had exhorted men to indure pain and death, could never make ſo many Diſciples by their Eloquent words, as ſimple Chriſtians had done by their deeds. *Illa ipſa obſtinatio quam ex probatis, Magiſtra eſt.* "That very obſtinate Reſolution, "which you upbraid us withal, is a Mi-"ſtreſs that inſtructs the world. Who "is there that beholds it, and is not moved "to enquire into the cauſe? And who is "there that takes the pains to enquire into "the cauſe, and doth not become a Proſe-"lyte to this Religion? and who is there "that becomes a Proſelyte to it, and is not "ready alſo to loſe his life for it, that "he may obtain the favour of God with "the expence of his blood?

And indeed it may be queſtioned whether the Apoſtles and their followers, did more amaze the world by the wonder of their Miracles, or by their ſtupendious patience under the moſt cruel Torments. This, I think, is certain, That the Divine manner

manner of their ſuffering, was a thing leſs controverted, than their prodigious aſtoniſhing works. They, I mean, who diſputed the laſt, could not but admire and commend the firſt. They aſcribed their Miracles ſometime to the power of evil ſpirits: But their meek and Lamb-like Patience, their tender-hearted Charity to thoſe that hated them, their forgiving their Enemies, their praying for their Perſecutors, their bleſſing thoſe that curſed them, and obliging thoſe that reviled and abuſed them; theſe things the Devil himſelf knew not how to calumniate, no more than he knew how to counterfeit.

His Agents and Factors had not the heart to ſuffer any thing, but loved their eaſe and their pleaſure; though they appeared with a very ſtrange power of marvels, and ſigns, and lying wonders. *As Jannes and Jambres*, ſays St. *Paul*, *withſtood Moſes, ſo did theſe alſo reſiſt the Truth*, which was preached by the Apoſtles. That is, as thoſe Egyptian Magicians vied a while with *Moſes* in ſtrange works, 2 Tim. 3. 8

works, and aſtoniſhing operations, whereby they ſought to impair his credit with the people: So did theſe new Juglers contend for ſome time with the Apoſtles, and hoped to gain as great admiration, by imitating their Miracles. But they were not more deſirous all this time to ſhew themſelves in mighty works, than they were craftily careful to ſhun all pain and trouble for their cauſe. For it is expreſly noted as a part of their Character by the ſame St. *Paul*, *Philip. III.* 18. that they were *Enemies to the Croſs of Chriſt*, in which the Apoſtles gloried and rejoyced, II *Cor.* XII. 9, 10.

And here it will not be unfit to note theſe two things:

I. Firſt, That what glory ſoever there was in Miracles (as they did at laſt ſo outſhine all Impoſters, that they quite eclipſed them, no leſs than *Moſes* did the Magicians), it never appeared more illuſtrious, than when the Apoſtles exerciſed perfect patience under the ſoreſt diſtreſſes.

Then

Then the Divine vertue in them broke out, and ſhone moſt brightly. *When they were weak, then were they ſtrong*, as St. *Paul* ſpeaks in the place forenamed. When they were cruſhed by the power of their Enemies, then they moſt amazed them, by diſcovering this mighty power of Chriſt in ſuch weak and earthen Veſſels. What could be more aſtoniſhing, than to ſee thoſe who were faſt manacled and fettered, unlooſe their own and others bands, ſhake the foundations of Priſons, open without any Key, or other Inſtrument, the Dores which were ſtrongly lock'd and barr'd upon them: Nay, unchain not only faſt-bound bodies, but alſo miſerably inthralled Souls? Was it not a great wonder to ſee Jaylors come and crouch to thoſe whom they had newly ſcourged; deſiring to be unbound and abſolved by their chained Captives, and yeilding themſelves voluntary Priſoners to thoſe, whom they had violently kept in durance? Yet this we read in the Story of the bleſſed St. *Paul*, Act. *XVI*, who then triumphed when he ſate in the

Stocks ; then appeared illuſtrious, when he was thruſt into a Dungeon (for that's the meaning of the *inner Priſon* there mentioned); then was highly honoured, inſomuch that they were ready to kiſs his Stripes, when he was treated as a man of no account.

Here the Apoſtles and their Succeſſors left all their oppoſers far behind them, who fled from dangers, and timerouſly avoided all pain and trouble, or endured them with a baſe and abject Spirit, which ſunk when it wanted the peoples breath to blow it up. They were far from *taking pleaſure in infirmities*, *in reproaches*, *in neceſſities*, *in perſecutions*, *in diſtreſſes* ; having no hopes to win any glory by this means, as St. *Paul* did : who demonſtrated his Apoſtleſhip *in all patience*, as well as *in ſigns*, and *wonders*, *and mighty deeds*, II *Cor.* XII. 10. 12.

But true Patience is ſuch an admirable property, that the Devil hath not

not the power to attain ſo much as a ſhadow of it. It is too beautiful for his deformed nature, and crooked diſpoſition : being a compoſition of all thoſe lovely virtues and graces of the Holy Spirit, to which he is a perfect ſtranger. He can ſometime transform himſelf into an Angel of Light; but when do we find him in the form of a truly reſigned and contented ſufferer? This is the unalienable Prerogative of Chriſt; and the great Champions of his Faith, who with ſuch a Charity as St. *Paul* deſcribes, I *Cor.* XIII. 4, 5, 6, 7. (every property of which is the Character of Patience, as *Tertullian* hath truly obſerved) endured all the contempt, hatred and cruelty of the world; accounting it a great honour and gain (no diſparagement or damage at all) to be vile, and to loſe all they had, for the ſake of their Dear Lord and Maſter Chriſt Jeſus.

There did, it is true, ariſe in after Ages ſuch ſturdy Spirits (for inſtance

the *Circumcellions*, a part of the *Donatists* Faction) as would endure any thing with a barbarous resolution, for the credit of those Dotages wherewith they troubled the world: But they were wholly void of that ancient Spirit, which had ever been in Christian sufferers. They had nothing of that *Modestissima Patientia* (as the Author of the Book *de Duplici Martyrio* speaks) that most Modest Patience wherewith Christian Religion inspired its followers. *Illud placidum, illud mansuetum*, &c. That sweet, that soft, that gentle and tender, that humbly sublime (as his Phrase is) and sublimely humble Spirit, was no where to be found but among the Martyrs; who never spake a worse word, when they were condemned, than *Deo gratias*, thanks be to God; which was the common form wherein they received their Sentence from the mouth of their Judges:

That's the *second* thing I have to add,

II.

II. That when ſome Impoſtors endeavoured to imitate the reſolution of the Apoſtles and Martyrs, in expoſing even their lives for the ſake of their vain imaginations, they were not able to imitate them at all in the Divine manner of their ſufferings. It is excellently ſaid by St. *Gregory Nazianzen*, in his Funeral Oration for his Father, That this bleſſed Martyr St. *Stephen* offered to God a greater thing than Death, *viz.* Long-ſuffering, meekneſs, and forgiving of his Enemies. He oppoſed, as the other *Gregory* ſpeaks, πῷ θυμῷ τὴν μακροθυμίαν, &c. to their anger a patient ſpirit, to their threats ſilence, to their hatred ardent love, to their malignity good will, to their falſe accuſations preaching of the Truth. If the falſe Apoſtles and other pretenders, could have appeared in this handſom dreſs, their deluſion had been very dangerous: But here they halted, and knew not how to follow the genuine Diſciples of Chriſt Jeſus. *Orat. XIX.*

Their

Their hardineſs, as St. *Auſtin* ſpeaks of the ſurly Sect before-mentioned (many of which would kill themſelves, and force others to kill them), was to be admired, for it was very great: but their patience was not to be admired, for it was none at all. They ſuffered much evil, that they might do the more. They cared not what others did to them; but withal, they cared not what they did to others.

This was a remarkable difference, which is all the time will give me leave to mention, between the Chriſtian Martyrs and their Counterfeits: The one were meek, the other angry and furious. The one humble, the other haughty. The one ready to do good to thoſe by whom they ſuffer'd, the other deſirous of revenge. The one loved their Enemies, the other only contemn'd them. The one were forward to excuſe their folly, the other to aggravate and upbraid them with it.

The

The one ſmiled upon their perſecutors and bleſſed them, the other look'd as if they would pour out Anathema's, and excommunicate them from all their charitable thoughts. Nothing was more peaceable and quiet than the one, while the other were tumultuous and violent. The Martyrs were ſubmiſſive and eaſily govern'd, but the other were boiſterous and violent. It was proper to the former to appear with a modeſt chearfulneſs, and a humble confidence; but the other ſeemed to be ſurly rather than well ſatisfied; bold, rather than well aſſured.

And therefore no wonder that theſe Holy Souls ſo mightily prevailed over all the powers of darkneſs, in what ſhape ſoever they appeared; and that they *overcame*, as St. *John* writes, *the Dragon, that old Serpent the Devil, by the blood of the Lamb, and the word of their teſtimony, not loving their lives unto the death.* And no wonder alſo, they had ſuch a lively hope in God,

and

and could look up ſo ſtedfaſtly to Jeſus, as this bleſſed Martyr did, expecting that he would receive their Spirits, with the kindeſt affection unto himſelf: For they had attained to the Baptiſm wherewith he the King of glory was Baptized: A Baptiſm (as St. *Cyprian* calls Martyrdom) *In gratia majus, in poteſtate ſublimius*, &c. *In grace greater, in power more ſublime, in honour more precious. A Baptiſm in which the Angels baptize, in which God and his Chriſt rejoyce. A baptiſm after which no man ſins; which conſummates the encreaſe of our faith; and parting us from the world, ſtraight-way unites us to God. In the baptiſm of water is received remiſſion of ſins; but in this of blood, the Crown of Virtues.*

De Exhort. Martyrii.

And a very noble Crown ſure it was, that ſuch faithful followers might hope to receive from the hands of ſo gracious a Maſter. For being ſo much advanced above the world while they were in it, and having done him ſuch eminent

nent Service; they could not doubt of his favour in lifting them up to live with himself in exceeding great bliss, when his Enemies would not permit them to live here any longer. If there were any thrones higher than other, in those heavenly places, where St. *Stephen* saw our Saviour, they might very well expect to be promoted to them; to reign with him there in endless glory, and to be honoured here on earth with perpetual praises.

I.

For from all this you cannot but see how fit and just it is, that we should make most solemn commemorations of those, to whom the Christian world stands so deeply obliged: and that the Church should give a kind of first-fruits of them unto this glorious Martyr, whom St. *Gregory Naz.* calls *Orat. XXII.* Ἀπαρχὴ τῶν μετὰ χριστὸν παθόντων, *the first fruits of those who suffered after Christ.* This the ancient Christians did with so great affection, that their Enemies calumni-

ated it, and ſaid they worſhipped them. No, ſays St. *Cyril* in his VI Book againſt *Julian*, (where he juſtifies this practice excellently; and therefore give me leave to contract a long diſcourſe he hath about it), "There is no "Ἀνθρωπολατρία, *Man-worſhip* among Chri- "ſtians. For we have not made a God "of a Man, nor adore one that is not "by nature God, when we worſhip "Chriſt himſelf. But acknowledging "that man, who appeared to be the "Word of God, by whom all things "were made, we go to him as God; "for ſo he is. As for the Martyrs, we "neither call them Gods, nor give "them any Divine Worſhip: Yet we "cannot but honour them; or rather "we crown them ταῖς ἀναλόγοις τιμαῖς, with "the higheſt honours: As thoſe who "have generouſly contended for the "truth, and reſolutely preſerved the "purity of our Faith, and propounded "themſelves as certain Images of that "ſo much admired fortitude and gallan- "try to all the world. There can be

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"no absurdity in it; but rather it is "necessary, that they who excelled in "such famous deeds, should be crowned "with endless honour. Did not com- "mon reason teach the ancient *Greeks* "as much? For those that hazarded "their lives at *Marathon* for the safety "of their Country, and those that stoutly "opposed the Army of *Xerxes* in after- "times, the *Athenians* were wont, "meeting together every year at their "Graves, to crown with their Enco- "miums and high commendations, as "men that dyed a glorious death. "And your *Plato* says, That they who "live excellently and dye bravely, "should be honoured as more than men, "and their Tombs become venerable. It "is no wonder then that we account the "Holy Martyrs worthy αἰδοῦς ἀπάσης of all "respect and reverence, and that we ho- "nour their very Monuments; making "a perpetual never-fading commemora- "tion of them, serve in stead of a small "recompence of such illustrious vertue. Thus He.

And it is very well known how, in thoſe days, their names were ſolemnly rehearſed in the Publick Liturgies of the Church. Which cuſtom, though it be not ſtill continued, yet their memory is ever precious; we honour them with due praiſe; we make mention of their noble deeds with hearty thankſgivings to God for them: *Laudamus, glorificamus, admiramur*, &c. (to ſpeak in the words of St. *Auſtin*, or whoever he was that wrote the Book *de excidio urbis*), *we praiſe, we glorifie, we admire the holy Martyrs; we celebrate their days with a pious ſolemnity; we venerate their worth, and as far as we can we imitate them, and endeavour to do as they did.* For by their zealous labours and ſufferings, Infidels were converted, lapſed Chriſtians recovered, the doubtful confirmed, the luke-warm inflamed, the fervour of the pious doubled; and all Poſterity excited both to adore the power of the Divine Grace in them, and alſo to hope in God for the like Grace, to help in time of need.

Thoſe

Thoſe are the two reaſons St. *Baſil* gives why thoſe that loved the Martyrs were ſo unwearied in their commemoration of them, Becauſe *the honour which is given to our pious fellow-ſervants, is a demonſtration of our affection to our common Maſter: And he that entertains brave men with due reſpect, will not fail to imitate them on the like occaſion.* *In XL. Martyres.*

II.

And that I muſt needs ſay, is the greateſt honour we can do them, to propound them always to our ſelves as our patterns, and to follow them in their conſtant love to God, to Religion, and to all Mankind, whatſoever we ſuffer for it. True Chriſtian Piety and Vertue, if we will allow the Martyrs to have had any judgment, is the moſt valuable thing in the whole world; for they preferred it before their lives. And therefore all Infidelity is a direct reproach to thoſe bleſſed Souls; repreſenting them as a company of raſh Zealots, that threw away.

away their lives for a fancy: And all vice and wickedneſs is a conſtant manifeſt ſcorn and contempt of their Sanctity, as the fooliſh ſtrictneſs of thoſe who underſtood not their liberty. If we will honour them, we muſt heartily believe and obey that Goſpel which they preached and aſſerted with their blood. We muſt endeavour, as one under the name of St. *Cyprian* ſpeaks, *Ut tota etiam vita Martyrium, hoc eſt teſtimonium Deo reddat*; that our whole life may be a Martyrdom; that is, a teſtimony unto God. Let it teſtifie that we own him, that we remember him, that we fear and reverence him, and that we love him, and eſteem his love and favour more than life it ſelf. Let it witneſs how much we love his will better than our own; and what a Grace we think it, that he hath taught us to deny ungodlineſs and worldly luſts, and to live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly in the world. Thoſe luſts (called *worldly*, becauſe they are ſo common) are the Perſecutors, which now we are to conflict withal,

withal, as the Martyrs did with other Enemies. Here is now the trial of our Vertue; here is the proof our Fidelity; these put us to the test, whether we will stick to our Lord and Master, or yeild to their desires. *Si deest Tyrannus, si tortor, si spoliator*, &c. as St. *Austin* speaks; though there be no Tyrant (blessed be God in these peaceable days), no Tormentor, no Plunderer; yet evil desires are never wanting, to afford daily occasion of Martyrdom. For it is a kind of death (*sine cruore Martyrium*, in the Phrase of *Sulpitius*, a Martyrdom without blood: *occultum Martyrium*, in the language of St. *Ambrose*, a secret unseen Martyrdom) to suppress all desires of sinful pleasures; to bear with the unkind censures of the envious, and the reproaches of the malicious; to forbear revenge, when a fair opportunity is offered; to stifle all motions of anger, and wrath, and discontent, and hatred, and pride, vainglory and ambition, when there are constant provocations, and strong temptations to them. These are the evil affe-

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ctions we must manfully resist and crucifie: and when they are dead, it will not be hard for us, by the Grace of God, to dye too, if need be, for our Saviour's sake.

III.

And now especially (which is the last thing) let every one of our lives give a testimony to God, and do honour to his Religion; when we solemnly commemore (as we do at this time of the year) both the wonderful great Love of our Lord the Eternal Son of God, in becoming a man for us, and the love also which the Martyrs, those rational whole burnt-offerings (as *Greg. Naz.* calls them), those perfect Sacrifices, those acceptable Oblations, expressed to him, in dying for his Service. Let us now carefully avoid all things contrary to our profession; all riot and luxury, drunkenness and revelling, chambering and wantonness, foolish (that is filthy, lascivious) talking and jesting: For these things, saith the Apostle, *are not convenient* (do not agree with Christianity): *but rather giving of thanks* for God's inestimable

Orat. XVIII. in laud. Cypr.

mable benefits beſtowed on us. *V. Eph.* 4. *Seccine exprimitur publicum gaudium per publicum dedecus*,&c. (as *Tertullian* ſpeaks of the Pagan Feſtivities), *Is this the way to expreſs a publick joy by a publick ſhame? Do thoſe things become our ſolemn days, which are unfit to be done at any time? Valde abſurdum eſt* (to uſe alſo the words of St. *Hierom*) *velle nimia ſaturitate honorare Martyrem, quem ſcimus Deo placuiſſe jejuniis.* It is extreamly abſurd to think to honour the Martyr by exceſs, who we know pleaſed God by faſtings: To celebrate his memory, meerly with Plays, and Sports and Merriment, who we know was acceptable to our Lord, by devout Prayers, Praiſes and Thankſgivings: To keep his day after the Heatheniſh faſhion, whoſe Martyrdom was the *deſtruction of error* (as the forenamed Greek Father ſpeaks), *the perſecution of Vice, the drowning of Sin, and the cleanſing of the world.*

Not that it is unfit now to Feaſt and recreate our ſelves: for it is never more

ſeaſonable, nor more ſafe, to feaſt and refreſh our bodies, than when at ſuch ſolemnities we have feaſted our Souls. We can never be better diſpoſed, nor better underſtand how to uſe God's bleſſings thankfully, ſoberly, and charitably, than when he is freſh in our thoughts, and we have been commemorating his marvellous bounty to us all. And therefore after the Pſalms and Hymns wherewith they anciently praiſed God for the Martyrs; there followed in many places, σωφρονίσατα συμπόσια (as the great *Conſtantine* ſpeaks) moſt ſober feaſts of Chriſtian good-fellowſhip; wherein the poor were fed, and all enmities buried. Nor did they think it an unfit expreſſion of their joy, to dance at the Sepulchres of the Martyrs, ἐνθέοις χορείαις, with Godly and Religious dances; as both St. *Baſil* and his great Friend ſo often mentioned, expreſly tell us. And is it not poſſible for us to ſeparate ſuch innocent things from that intemperance and wantonneſs, which at laſt robbed the Martyrs of this part of their honour, and cauſed theſe cuſtoms to

Ad Sanct. Cœlum. C. 12.

Hom. in Barlaam.

Carm. 63.

to be abolished? Let us but so devoutly attend upon the Divine Service on such days, as to carry away a sense of God in our mind; and the business is done. That will sufficiently secure us, and preserve us from danger. Whatsoever we do, we shall express the Character which *Clemens Alexandrinus* gives of his wise Christian, who, he says, is σεμνὸς ἅμα καὶ ἱλαρὸς ἐν πᾶσιν, *at the same time both grave and merry in all things. Grave, because he remembers God: and merry, because of the many good things which he enjoys by the favour of God.* *Strom. L. VII.*

For all which his Holy Name be praised, as well as for his Spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus; To whom with the Father and the Holy-Ghost, be all honour, thanksgiving, love and faithful service both now and evermore. *Amen.*

THE END.